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Letter dated 14 March 2001 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Uganda to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the letter from the Chargé d'affaires of the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 26 February 2001. The letter appeared as Security Council document S/2001/174 of 27 February 2001.

1. We have noted with great relief the stated assurances given by the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to fully respect the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 1341 (2001) of 22 February 2001. We have also noted the apparent change by the same Government in that it has agreed to enter into internal dialogue with the various political groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as to accept the Facilitator, Sir Ketumile Masire, as provided for under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement.

2. However, there are certain issues raised by the Chargé d'affaires in his letter which cannot pass unchallenged because, not only do they give the wrong impression, they appear to be deliberate distortions.

3. Security concerns of neighbouring countries: The Chargé d'affaires confuses the reason why the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo have security concerns. The issue is not that the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is to be held responsible for the "internal arguments" of its neighbours, but that what the Democratic Republic of the Congo has done/is doing with the armed groups who have gone into the Democratic Republic of the Congo and used it as a base to cause "insecurity" for the neighbouring countries. Allow me to refer to the report of the Secretary-General of 17 January 2000 (S/2000/30, para. 74), in which the Secretary-General clearly identified one of the root causes of the problem in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: "It is evident that the problem of the armed groups ... is a key factor in the conflict in the subregion, since it undermines the security of all the States concerned". I wish in particular to draw the attention of the Chargé d'affaires to the Secretary-General's conclusion: "It is essential to resolve this question in order to establish a lasting peace".

4. (a) On respect for human rights: Here again it is clear that the Chargé d'affaires of the Democratic Republic of the Congo is not being honest. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo does not exonerate the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from human rights violations in that country. What is clear is that respect for human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo should be universal and not selective.

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(b) HIV/AIDS: There is no evidence that HIV/AIDS has only increased in occupied provinces. This is a fallacy. It is well known that the prevalence of this disease is a major problem and a preoccupation of our continent. It is not a "direct result of the aggression against the Democratic Republic of the Congo" as the Chargé d'affaires wants us to believe. Nor are matters helped by obfuscating issues.

(c) Hema/Lendu conflict: Uganda is accused of direct involvement in the outbreak and continuation of inter-ethnic fighting between the Hema and the Lendu. Again the Chargé d'affaires is not being honest about the history of his country. What are the facts? Uganda has done its best to stop inter-ethnic fighting, pacify the affected areas and unite the various groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, historical rivalry between Hema and Lendu notwithstanding. The Secretary-General acknowledged Uganda's positive role in his report on the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) of 12 February 2001 (S/2001/128, para. 27): "Since 22 January 2001 MONUC military observers in Bunia have reported the situation in town to be tense but with the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF) in effective control."

(d) Recruitment and deportation of Congolese children to Uganda: Contrary to what is written, the truth is that following the outbreak of the recent ethnic fighting in Bunia, about 600 people, including children, were airlifted to Uganda. This was at the request of parents and Congolese authorities. The children (163) have since been handed over to UNICEF — on 22 February 2001. The Minister for the Presidency handed them to UNICEF, UNHCR and Save the Children, for settlement. It is again on record that the United Nations applauded Uganda for this in the UNICEF statement issued in New York in February 2001.

5. I will not comment on paragraphs 8 and 9 of the letter, because the United Nations Security Council is fully seized of the matter and is aware that the Government of Uganda has been and continues to be very cooperative in every respect.

6. I wish to take this opportunity, however, to assure the Security Council and the international community at large, that Uganda is committed to peace and stability in the subregion and that it has spared no effort in the search for a lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. As a signatory to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, the Kampala Disengagement Plan and the Harare sub-plans for disengagement and redeployment of forces, Uganda shall not tire of calling upon all the parties to the Lusaka Process to honour their obligations under the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. It is against this background that my Government warmly applauds the dialogue between the parties to the Lusaka Process and the United Nations Security Council held from 20 to 22 February 2001. We remain hopeful that both sides to that dialogue and its outcome will deliver on the commitments undertaken.

7. I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council and have it circulated as a document of the Council.

(*Signed*) Daudi M. **Taliwaku**
Ambassador
Deputy Permanent Representative and Charge d'affaires a.i.